

# Speech

Organization of American States



**LUIGI R. EINAUDI, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL OF  
THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES  
AT THE SUMMIT IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW GROUP (SIRG)  
MEETING  
October 27, 2002 - Washington, DC**

Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO)  
Washington, DC

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Dr. Brandling-Bennett; Ambassador Herrera; members of the Executive Committee from the United States and Chile; Mr. Jaime Aparicio, who has done such a significant job as the Director of the Summit process:

I am really extremely pleased to be here for two reasons. The first is a very simple and direct one; it is that being in PAHO, we are underscoring the existence of the inter-American system and we are doing so with an institution which, like ECLAC/CEPAL, is simultaneously a harmonious and effective member of the universal system of the United Nations.


The second reason—and it's the primary reason—that I am so pleased is that this is the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG). And I could not be happier, really, that the Secretary General is doing the Organization's, the Summit's and the Lord's work in Venezuela right now, so that I had this chance to welcome you and give you some of my perspectives as I see them from where I sit, as the number two official in the OAS.


I would like to start simply by saying that the Summit has proved to be our central guide and stimulus. It's not just that we have tended to make its agenda and plan of action our agenda; it's more that the driving force of the work that we do tends to derive from and be given confidence by the meetings of our presidents and heads of government. The Inter-American Democratic Charter was mandated by the Quebec Summit, and there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that had it not been mandated by the presidents and heads of government, it could not have come into existence with the speed and efficiency with which it was possible to do it, thanks to the efforts of a number of the people who are actually here in this room today.

In fact, the defense of democracy—with the work of the Secretary General in Venezuela, with the work that he and I have been doing in Haiti, with the less noticeable but often more important work being carried out by the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (UPD)—clearly is fundamentally assisted by the Summit process, as is the work that the Organization has been able to do on the peaceful resolution of disputes.

We have brought the traditional and longstanding differendum between Belize and Guatemala to a new stage in the last weeks, and I think that, again, the fact that the Summit had very clearly endorsed the Peace Fund and efforts in this area was of inestimable value in setting the direction and in keeping us all together as we tackled some of the very difficult problems.

We also are aware that we've just had the Trade Ministerial in Ecuador and that we will be shortly having a Meeting of Defense Ministers in Chile. The Secretary General, I think, is in the lead in understanding and stressing the importance of the ministerials to our cooperation. In effect, it is the work of the different ministries that ultimately gives shape to the breadth of the cooperation that being part of this system and the Hemisphere means.

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I have a reaction of my own to the ministerials, which I thought I would share with you very quickly. It is that the ministerials pose a particular challenge to information sharing and to our awareness of what is going on. Even from the so-called lofty bureaucratic heights that I, as a senior public servant, occupy, I was impressed by the report before you that was put together by the Joint Working Group on what has been happening in accordance with Summit mandates over the last several months. And I think that if I was a little bit surprised and definitely impressed, I think that would also be true of many in the public in our countries if only they were able to know.

My sense is that the ministries represent what in the State Department we used to sometimes call "the stove-pipe effect." They each work as separate entities, channeling upward their information without really sharing it laterally.

That really brings me to the point. Presidents and heads of government can do what the rest of us cannot. And if there is anybody who should defeat the "stove-pipe effect," who should somehow ensure through the presidency that there be coordination and dissemination of our efforts, I think it has to be there at the top, at the presidency.

Of course—and this is my last point—we have to depend on our presidents for more than coordination. In fact, coordination is in some ways an abuse; for it is policy guidance that we need. It is, I said before, confidence—I would now add the word "inspiration"—that we need. I think today, in a very difficult set of times in the Hemisphere and outside, that guidance is particularly needed.

Where do the Americas fit in today's world? That is a very difficult question. It is one that really, ultimately, can only be answered by hard work, framed by good ideas, which are given authority. I hope that I have just succeeded in defining the essence of why the Summit process is really so important and why I wish you the best possible work in the rest of this day.

Thank you very much. [Applause.]

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Headquarters: 17th Street & Constitution Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006, USA  
Tel. (202)458-3000 / Email: multimedia@oas.org

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